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MANAGEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

U. S. Department of Agriculture

A summary of significant events of
interest to USDA management

SEP 4 1980 Issue #107
August 1980

MANAGEMENT CONTROL OF CONSULTING SERVICE CONTRACTS AND IMPROVEMENT OF AGENCY PROCUREMENT PRACTICES.....In a memorandum to the Heads of Selected Departments and Agencies dated July 2, 1980, the Director of OMB has stressed the need to "take action to focus agency management attention on the critical need for significant improvement in agency management controls and practices." This memorandum further states that "The President has directed that immediate action be taken to correct the lack of adequate agency management controls over procurement practices. This lack of management control has led to various abuses in Federal contracting activities. While we are confident that most Federal procurements are conducted properly, we must insure the integrity of the Government's procurement process by eliminating the possibility of abuse. It is especially important that competitive contracting procedures be used whenever possible, so that taxpayers are assured of economical and equitable arrangements."

The OMB instructions specified that agencies develop management control systems to reflect a close examination of the adequacy of existing management controls and changes needed to assure ethical practices and integrity in the procurement process. Specific areas to be covered included:

1. An alert to senior management on the seriousness of the situation and the importance of corrective actions to be taken.
2. An examination of the full array of possible means to avoid conflicts of interest to assure adherence to ethics in government standards.
3. The need for Inspectors General to give priority attention to the OMB memorandum as a major aspect of their fraud and waste efforts; to develop a consistent audit and inspection approach; to conduct audit samples of existing service contracts and to evaluate consulting services as part of the budget cycle.
4. The designation of a career SES manager to be responsible for effective implementation of a management control system.
5. Procedures to assure regular written evaluations of the performance of each consulting services contractor.

The very tight deadline for a response precluded extensive consultation with agencies of the Department although copies of the OMB memorandum, the Department's response, a Secretary's Memorandum on consulting services contracts, and the new OMB Circular A-120 were sent to agency heads and staff office directors. The Assistant Secretary for Administration was designated to oversee the Department's management control system. So far, comments by OMB on our efforts have been favorable. (Contact: Terry Hall, MS, ext. 76010)

RIDESHARING SURVEY.....GSA, in conjunction with the Federal Executive Boards nationwide, recently conducted a survey of Federal employee commuting patterns. Although the final report will not be issued until October, the preliminary data is interesting in that it reveals a higher than expected level of ridesharing.

Mode	Federal Government			USDA
	Nationwide (%)	Outside DC (%)	DC (%)	DC (%)
Drive Alone	48	56	21	18
Carpool	29	25	39	44
Vanpool	2	2	3	4
Private Bus	1	1	2	1
Mass Transit	14	9	31	30
Other (walk, bike, etc)	6	7	4	3

A breakdown by Federal agency outside D.C. is not yet available. (Contact: Bill Roth, O&F, ext. 79215)

PRESIDENT'S TRANSPORTATION ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAM.....In a memorandum dated July 23, the President calls for Federal agencies to place renewed emphasis on energy conservation in four areas:

- A 10% improvement in fleet average fuel economy.
- A 20% increase in ridesharing.
- A program to provide energy efficient training to all government vehicle drivers.
- The distribution of energy conservation materials to all employees.

These actions are identical to those committed to by business and industry leaders. Implementation details for the Department will be issued shortly. (Contact: Bill Roth, O&F, ext. 79215)

TRAINING STUDY.....The Senate Appropriations Committee Investigations Staff has initiated a study of government training and USDA is one of the five Federal agencies selected to participate. The study will focus primarily on training costs, job-relatedness of training and contracting. (Contact: John Kizler, OP, ext. 76977)

MINORITY BUSINESS ADVERTISEMENT.....OSDBU has placed an advertisement in the September 1980 issue of Black Enterprise Magazine emphasizing the Department's desire for greater minority participation on our domestic and foreign commodity purchases, storage, transportation and construction activities. Seven agencies, ASCS, FAS, FSQS, FS, APHIS, SCS and SEA are all expected to receive inquiries as a result of this advertisement. (Contact: Belinda Ward, OSDBO, ext. 77117)

NATIONAL MINORITY DATA BANK.....OSDBU has acquired a tape containing the names of approximately 2,500 minority firms available for procurement prospects from the Department of Commerce. This tape, which will be updated twice a year, is available to all agencies. (Contact: Cathy Cronin, OSDBU, ext. 77922)

OSDBU DIRECTORS GROUP.....Preston Davis, Director of OSDBU, has taken the lead in bringing together for a lunch meeting the OSDBU Directors from Federal Departments and Agencies. A full meeting agenda has been prepared to discuss mission accomplishment, goals and development of a forum for speeches at major government and private industry functions.

RETIREMENT COUNSELING PROGRAM.....The Graduate School is offering a highly individualized counseling service to those who have taken the Seminar Retirement Planning, S-PENR 720. This program offers an opportunity for private assistance and will enable the participants to explore more alternatives and make better decisions about future retirement. Topic areas covered include:

- Development of a positive mental attitude toward retirement;
- How to make better decisions about when to retire;
- What the advantage of single, survivor or insurable interests are and how to calculate the benefits;
- Second careers or ways of increasing income;
- What hobbies or educational opportunities are available;
- The advantages and disadvantages of various places to retire.

(Contact: Graduate School Special Programs, ext. 73247)

SENIOR LEVEL INFORMATION OFFICERS AND INFORMATION SPECIALIST PROGRAMS.....

The Graduate School is offering two new programs designed to assist senior level information officers and information specialists with their increased responsibilities. In two programs taught by Lewis M. Helm, formerly Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs of HHS (HEW), participants will gain greater understanding of the history and methods in government public affairs.

- Crisis Communications: Public Information During a Crisis is a seminar that centers around actual case histories and will show better methods of managing information contingency plans. The course will be offered on February 9-10 and April 13-14, 1981.
- The Historical and Legal Basis for Government Public Affairs will present current laws in a historical perspective and will include anti-lobbying and anti-publicity statutes; the Freedom of Information, Privacy and Government in the Sunshine Acts; security classification; and Executive Privilege. The course will be offered on November 6,13,20, 1980 and May 7,14,21, 1981.

(Contact: Dorothy Prioleau, Graduate School, ext. 73247)

GRADUATE SCHOOL ASSESSMENT CENTERS.....The Graduate School Special Program offers Assessment Centers to government agencies on a contract basis for executives, middle managers and first line supervisors. The Assessment Center is a systematic method for identifying and developing personnel talent and helps organizations make internal and external selection decisions by providing indicators for an employee's future career development. This is particularly important in the selection of candidates for the Senior Executive Service. (Contact: Anne Shea, Graduate School, ext. 73247)

HISPANIC HERITAGE WEEK.....Hispanic Heritage Week, will be celebrated September 15-19 in the Department with a series of events beginning at 9:30 a.m., September 15, in the patio. Secretary Bergland will be the featured speaker. A speaker is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on the 17th and the closing ceremonies will be held at 10:00 a.m. on the 19th; both events also in the patio. Exhibits will be on display during the week. (Contact: Vangie Elizondo, OEO, 755-1160)

OUTREACH SEMINAR..... OEO is in the final planning stage of conducting its sixth Outreach Seminar to be held on September 25 at the University of Maryland-Eastern Shore. This one day seminar is being held to improve communications between USDA personnel responsible for delivering program benefits to potentially eligible minority and women recipients. Following the Eastern Shore seminar, the next one will be held in San Antonio, Texas, on October 9-10.

These seminars, coordinated by the Office of Equal Opportunity, are a followup to the workshop held for minority leaders chaired by Secretary Bergland on May 31, 1978. (Contact: James Frazier, OEO, ext. 74256)

WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY..... August 26 has been designated as Women's Equality Day in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment guaranteeing the right to vote to women. (Contact: Marjory Hart, OEO, 755-1160)

AGE DISCRIMINATION REGULATIONS..... A draft of the USDA regulations implementing the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 prohibiting discrimination on the basis of age in Federal assistance programs and activities will be published shortly in the Federal Register. Sixty days are provided for comment after the date of publication. USDA agencies are encouraged to comment and to obtain comments from program recipients. (Contact: Carolyn Moore, OEO, ext. 75114)

ASCS MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT ITEMS.....

- Vehicle Mileage Reduction - ASCS has made significant progress in reducing the number of miles driven per year on agency business. The mileage driven for the base 12-month period of April 1978-March 1979 was 54,988,502. For the April 1979-March 1980 period, the mileage was 42,955,473; a 22% reduction. The reduction is attributed to an increased employee awareness of the energy crisis and the implementation of a new aerial observation program for acreage measurement. Based on 16 miles per gallon, at an average cost of \$1.20 per gallon, the savings are estimated at \$231,957 or 193,298 gallons.
 - Leased Vehicle Program - A recent study indicates that savings in operational costs and energy use could be realized by substituting commercially leased compact and subcompact sedans for certain high mileage privately-owned vehicles (POV). The cost data show that above 1,040 miles per month, per vehicle, it is cost effective to lease a vehicle rather than pay the POV mileage rate. This is based on \$.20 per mile for POV reimbursement and a monthly lease cost of \$145 plus \$.061 for gasoline, oil and maintenance. The study data indicate that the average POV gets 20 miles per gallon while the average for leased cars is 25 mpg.
 - Reports Review and Reduction - A recent agency review of all ASCS reports was conducted to eliminate unnecessary or duplicate reporting. This resulted in a reduction of 43 reports with an estimated annual savings of \$342,000. This will serve as the basis for continuing efforts to identify further opportunities for reductions and to analyze and improve all ASCS (reporting).
- (Contact: Wayne Wang, ASCS, ext. 72717)